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After Music

By MARIE EMILIE GILCHRIST

I heard remembered melodies once more:
Warm with old thought, the soft notes fell like rain
Beating the beauty of a dear refrain,
And echo spoke in life's dim corridor.
Mellow and full, the limpid music flowed,
Hurried, receded, sang aloud, and hushed;
Then leapt impetuous and downward rushed
While light and color in its movement glowed.
Voices of many waters, wisely wrought
To one sweet harmony of liquid sound
Welling from hidden depths, remote, profound,
Touching green secret caverns, hid from thought,
Washing up buried jewels, golden ore—
I heard remembered melodies once more.

The Cure

By AGNES MARY BROWNELL

The little doctor, who had early been taken into partnership by his father, the big doctor, owing to a certain gravity of demeanor that might almost have been likened to the professional, and to an extensive practice among the dolls of the neighborhood, occupied the white block that surmounted a gate post of his father's yard, and beat a lively tattoo with his heels against its sides.

He was watching developments at the big white house opposite, long closed and untenanted, except for certain migratory families of birds, that moved into quarters under the eaves each spring, and out again in the fall.

Now for a week past, strange and unprecedented affairs had been going forward — doors and windows were thrown wide, rugs and curtains were put to air until the yard resembled a bazaar. There was a sound all day of furniture being moved and rubbed, a clacking of mops and brooms, a chinking sound of china and glass, a polishing of window glass to the likeness of mirrors. And ever there went up from the huge brick chimney, a smoke as of incense accompanying the rite of cleansing.

Now in the late afternoon, shining, open-hearted, as to doors and windows, with white curtains waving, flower-pots in the square bow-window each gayly

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furnished forth with a spike or branch or vine full of blossoms, the white house seemed all dressed and ready and waiting as for a visitor.

Down the long, straight village street came into view, moving more slowly than its wont, the shabby station hack; and presently it stops at the gate of the house opposite. Immediately there appears in the door, a buxom and capable figure clad in the freshest of gingham and whitest of aprons, and around the side of the house emerges a companion figure in good, stout corduroys. Meanwhile, the driver descends, and now opens the door of his vehicle, standing there at attention. First emerges a tall spare woman with various bundles under one arm as of shawl, bag, scarf and pillow. The two of them assist another to alight — she too is tall, and very thin, and wrapped as she is in a long cloak and swathed as to her head in many folds of chiffon veiling, so that no real likeness of her can be seen, yet the impression she leaves with the little doctor on the gate-post is of one very fair and beautiful — like the ladies in the green and gold fairy book in the book-case in his mother's sitting-room.

The lady seems to wave them aside, as with the motion of a wand, and walks alone, but slowly, to the door; and seems to greet the others, is drawn within, the door closes, the hack drives off, and the little doctor is minded to rub his eyes and wonder if it really happened. At this moment, his own door opens, a magic word is uttered and he scrambles down with a shout. It is red Nora calling: "Supper!"

It is early summer, but there is a faint chill in the air, as if the late tenant, Spring, had left scraps of her belongings such as small puffs of wind and ragged breezes, straying about in deserted corners. Nora, always red in winter from chaps, and in summer from sunburn, but whose culinary art is a match for any season, has set out a treat of honey and hot tea-biscuit. The little doctor, munching gravely at a satin brown crust, hears some talk of old Judge Pruden's place and of some one who ran away and of a note that said that she would come back. — But she never did. And the old Judge died, and the place was boarded up; but before that, Cyrus who cared for the team and the garden, and Amanda who did the kitchen work, were married, and did for him as if they were his own — as indeed they were, if long years of faithful service counted for anything. And now at last, Sylvia had come back as she had promised — but not for long — till fall, perhaps — till the leaves fell.

The little doctor, slightly streaked with honey about the mouth, spoke out from one of his impressive silences:

"Mother, is the White House haunted?" for so he always referred to the mansion opposite.

"'Haunted' — why, what a notion! there are no haunted houses," said his mother, a trifle sharply, for she was very modern. His father was not so sure — a physician meets with strange things in the course of his practice — but he only said, with the deference due a confrere — "Why do you ask, son?"

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"Because no one will stay there long," explained the little doctor, speaking from his observation of years (six in short). "Even the birds will only stay one summer — and now you say Sylvia will go away, and she's only just come."

"'Sylvia!' 'Just come!' Why, child — what are you talking about? What have you heard?" cried his mother in a pretty astonishment.

"I was sitting on the gate-post and I saw her come," said the little doctor, with a delicate lick of the upper lip. "She was all wrapped up in veils and a long cape, but she was lovely like the pictures in my story-book."

He went away and came back with his picture-book, having first removed with good soap and water, certain sticky reminders of his supper from his face and hands; and was soon deep in the consideration of the Sleeping Beauty, all blue and gold on a carved and gilt couch; and presently as he gazed upon her, she opened her eyes (they were blue, as he had hoped but had never been able to tell), and he asked her her name (for he had never known that either). She said: "I am Sylvia; who are you?" And he replied: "I am the little doctor." Then she said: "And can you cure folks?" So he said: "What seems to be the trouble, madam?" as was his custom in addressing the little doll-mothers who consulted him. And just as she was about to answer, they woke him up, pulling off a shoe. And it was only a dream after all.

Thereafter he heard no more about Sylvia, although the man Cyrus had been sent early one morning with a summons for the doctor; and now daily he went across the road and came back with a grave look.

"Isn't Sylvia going to get well?" the little doctor asked the big one after such a visit. The older doctor started a little — "Well?" he repeated. "I hope so — yes, I am sure of it — Sylvia will get quite well."

On a blue and gold morning in June which is the prettiest month of all, being the young girlhood of the year, the little doctor, jouncing a ball which was a very clown of balls, being striped red and white and most exceeding light on whatever it is stands for feet, proceeded down the street to the corner, back again on the opposite side, and just as he reached the White House the ball, in a most uncalled for manner, ricocheting lightly against the gate as if to get up steam, suddenly vaulted quite over, jumped lightly and impudently up and down on the pavement, and then rolled sedately down its length.

The little doctor pursued his errant play-fellow and pounced upon it just as it brought up against the lowest step. And then, as he started to rise, he saw in the half gloom of the porch framed in with a shimmering green wall of vines, what for a long, wordless moment he thought must surely be the Sleeping Beauty.

But not the Sleeping Beauty of the fairy tale book — that one suddenly seemed just the painted picture that it was — the very colors lost their magic. Here was no babyish blue and white and gold — Instead upon a great low couch of a wonderful russet leather like a brown autumn leaf, banked with cushions that were all dull reds like pressed ivy leaves, lay Sylvia.

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The folds of her loose dress were red too, but what a red — like a geranium flower in shadow; and best of all, her cheeks were red — a lovely, flickering red — beneath her shining eyes. The eyes were brown, and the hair; and the little doctor who was only six, and did not know he had the color sense, felt as he felt when the light streamed through the colored windows in church.

Then Sylvia spoke:

“Good morning,” she said, and her voice matched the rest, but it was very faint — slightly husky and reedy, almost as if it might have come from the stem of the bright dried leaves she made him think of.

The little doctor straightened up and removed his cap politely.

“Good morning,” he said.

And just as in his dream she went on: “I am Sylvia. Who are you?”

And he replied (as in the dream), “I am the little doctor.”

And she said: “And can you cure folks?”

And he replied as was his custom among his doll patients (O — if the dream will only keep on!): “What seems to be the trouble, madam?”

And the dream kept right on!

She laughed out — a gurgling, faint laugh, like an autumn brook heard from far off, and then she looked at him long as he stood there at the entrance to the porch — six years old, ruddy, hat in hand and ball squeaking a little, as in remonstrance at his clutch, clad in corduroys that testified to their wearing qualities — and for the rest, just boy.

"I think I will retain you," she said slowly, "as consulting physician. I have heard you spoken of very highly indeed." She rang a little silver bell that stood on a low table by her couch, and Amanda (the little doctor felt sure this must be Amanda), appeared in the immaculate gingham which looked as if it must have been ironed on both sides and then given an extra furbishing off with a polishing iron. With her came an entrancing odor as of ginger cookies or spice cake at the very least.

"Bring the little sewing chair, Amanda," said Sylvia, "and a plate of cookies, if they're done."

The little doctor with bated breath awaited the chair and the cookies — if they were done.

They were — great fat golden-brown beauties, crumbly round the edges and smelling, in the green gloom of the porch, like the kitchen end of a house at Thanksgiving time.

"This is my new doctor, Amanda," said Sylvia.

"Pleased to meet you," said Amanda, promptly and cordially extending a hand almost as red as Nora's.

The little doctor (who had risen at the introduction as his mother had taught him) now turned his attention to the blue and white plate of cookies, and having first handed it to Sylvia, who took one and nibbled at it daintily, helped himself.

So they sat and ate the cookies (or at least, the little doctor ate them — at any rate they disappeared in no long time); and talked about things in general — as, what cases were then prevalent among the neighborhood dolls, and how remarkable it was that

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all doll diseases immediately became epidemic; and finally, the cookies being all gone, and this oddly enough requiring approximately the length of time usually accorded a professional visit, the little doctor rose to go.

"You have done me a great deal of good," said Sylvia, bidding him good-bye, "but first, bring me two or three blossoms from the border along the walk."

The little doctor obeyed. The flowers were hearts-ease he well knew, and some just like them made the border about the round bed below the dining room window at home. He carried them to Sylvia, and she made a little nosegay of them and fixed them in his blouse.

"There, I shall call you Doctor Hearts-ease," she said.

He told his father all about it, as professional etiquette demanded; and the older doctor was much interested. "But the only prescription so far as I can make out, was ginger cookies," he said quizzically, "and you took that yourself." But he turned suddenly silent at the story of the hearts-ease. Who knows what living draughts and herbs of healing may be in the pharmacopoeia of a little unlearned child.

So it came about in the easy and natural way things have of adjusting themselves, that the senior doctor made the earlier visit each day, his young associate's being timed for the half hour before lunch or tea-time, as the patient might suggest.

Sometimes, on her best days, they walked down the path that had hearts-ease along its border, and they often discussed the matter of spading up a plot of ground in the garden and planting it with their favorites — when the little doctor's arms should be a little longer and stronger, and Sylvia could throw off the encumbering cape.

It would have been a wonderful garden, a rare convocation of flowers, for some of them were early spring ones, like tulips and narcissi, and some late blooming ones, like salvia. Doubtless some of the more exclusive ones, the lilies perhaps, would have felt themselves in strange company — but the friendly little hearts-ease around the borders would have made all that quite right.

More often they sat in the little green, half-lighted chamber of the porch, and wrestled with mighty problems — as, why was it when the children were all so happy dancing about, the hand-organ man should look so cross and the monkey so sad? and likewise in the case of the dancing bear — why weren't they glad too?

Where did the flowers hide inside the ugly little brown onion you planted in the ground, until they popped out in the spring, as if they had been playing hide and seek?

Why did the birds move every spring and fall like bad renters? And did Sylvia think her house was haunted?

Sylvia had never heard that before — why did the little doctor ask?

Because nobody would stay there long. Why was Sylvia going away again in the fall?

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“ ‘In the fall,’ ” repeated Sylvia, leaning forward on a little pointed elbow.

“When the leaves fall,” reiterated the little doctor, for he remembered the very words.

Sylvia sat looking at him a long moment in a puzzled way as if she had just heard a bit of unexpected news. Then she lay back again on a pillow that was colored like a red and purple plum, and said in her sweet, husky stem of a voice:

“You have just told me very prettily, something I have wanted to know a long time and never quite dared to ask — and no one has ever quite dared to tell me. Thank you, little Doctor Heartsease.”

But the little doctor in a most unprofessional manner, immediately put up a cuff to brimming eyes, and begged her not to go.

“I must go,” said Sylvia, in a shuddering voice.

“But you will not go till you are well?” questioned the little doctor eagerly. “My father will cure you if you will only stay long enough.”

“He will cure me?” questioned Sylvia faintly, with her eyes on the little doctor’s face.

“He said you would get well — my father said ‘Sylvia will get quite well’; and he always knows.”

“I shall be quite well,” repeated Sylvia slowly, as if she were learning a part — poor Sylvia, who had of late had such poor parts, could hardly imagining herself in this new rôle.

She lay with her eyes closed among her colored cushions. The little doctor softly smoothed the scarlet shawl over her feet, and stole away from his Sleeping Beauty.

But next day he had thought out a little game. Since Sylvia must go, they would wave each other good-bye, as he and his father and mother, leaning out of the big double-seated carriage had waved good-bye to Aunt Net and Great-aunt Betsy at the farmhouse door, the time they were in Indiana. Aunt Net up with the corner of her gingham apron, and Aunt Betsy with her black silk one and the rest out with their handkerchiefs — and such a waving of colors you never saw! Why, Hiram had a big red bandana! It made them all feel good inside — not sorry, like just shaking hands.

Sylvia clapped her thin hands at the plan; and after a silence, the little doctor asked if she had thought of any more stories — Sylvia was a prime story-teller.

So was the little doctor.

Sylvia suggested that he tell his first. The little doctor nothing loath, began:

“Once upon a time there was a little boy — an’ he ran away!”

“Ran away!” breathed Sylvia.

“To a circus!” continued the narrator. “His mother didn’t want him to go, so he ran away an’ crawled under the tent with some other bad boys an’ for a while he forgot all about his mother an’ how bad she would feel — but when he started home he went slower an’ slower an’ slower — an’ there was his mother leaning out of the gate an’ looking every way with her hands up to her eyes on account of the sun — an’ when she saw him she just rushed right

out an' hugged him an' said 'Little boys can't know how bad they make their mothers feel — an' Nora had baked him a little cake with frosting — an' that was all an' he was the little boy!' he finished in a grand climax.

"And — that was all — he wasn't punished," suggested Sylvia, delicately.

"Course he said he was sorry."

"And then of course she forgave him," said Sylvia.

"Huh — she'd already done that — before he got back — that's the way with mothers."

"And fathers?" questioned Sylvia.

"And fathers," affirmed the little doctor.

"Once upon a time," began Sylvia in her turn, "there was a little girl — and she too ran away — and she too forgot all about home —"

"And was it a circus?" cried the little doctor.

"A sort of circus," said Sylvia, nodding.

"An' shows in tents an' rings with ladies in silk dresses with very short skirts?" continued the little doctor, with eyes shining at thought of forbidden things.

"Not in tents," corrected Sylvia, "but in big lighted buildings, and with ladies in silk dresses certainly — but long ones with trains," she added primly.

"I should think they'd have been in the way," commented the little doctor, "on the trapezes."

"There were no trapezes," said Sylvia, "only a big stage. But after a long time — O, many days

and nights and months and years — she remembered about her father and her home and about two old friends who had always looked after it — and she came back. But by then her father was gone —”

The little doctor sighed. It sounded sad; and he (in common with a large reading public) liked happy endings.

“Do you think,” asked Sylvia, looking eagerly at the little doctor, “that he had forgiven her before she came — like your mother?”

“Course,” averred the little doctor stoutly. “He’d have to if he loved her like fathers do their little boys — and girls.”

“Do they love them,” asked Sylvia, very low, almost as if to herself, “after they are —”

“Dead,” said the little doctor with startling suddenness, and in the matter of fact manner which the members of his profession adopt toward that subject. “Course they do — why, my Great-aunt Betsy — you wouldn’t believe — but once she had a little girl named Lizzie — an’ she died — an’ they keep her little white bonnet in a band-box, an’ her little striped dress in a drawer, an’ take ’em out an’ look at ’em an’ talk about her, an’ my Great-aunt Betsy wipes her eyes, an’ they all love her like anything — an’ of course she loves them back — why, it wouldn’t be p’lite not to!” cried the little doctor, triumphantly vindicating his position.

He left in great spirits, and Sylvia, too, looked her very best — cheeks red, eyes shining. “I like your prescriptions very much, Doctor Hearts-ease,” she said, “they’re so pleasant to take.”

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The little doctor smiled his wide, boyish understanding smile — of course it was all in fun — he had given her no prescription, but she always pretended he had.

The next time he saw Sylvia (it was several days later, for the two doctors in a brief consultation had decided that, for a few days Sylvia would be best in her room, with only Amanda and the older doctor in attendance) she waved at him gayly from a great white bed; and she had made up a new game. They pretended that the bed was Great-aunt Betsy's big carry-all bound for the station, and each time they parted, Sylvia and the little doctor waved a gay good-bye.

"Because word might come very suddenly," explained Sylvia, "and I wouldn't have a chance to see you. This way, we'll have waved each other good-bye without knowing it's the last time, so there'll be no need of feeling bad over it."

The little doctor quite concurred; though he still leaned to the little green lighted porch and the russet couch; but the porch was now quite chilly even on the brightest days, and after all, they could spade and plant their little play flower-beds quite as well up stairs as down. Sylvia always would have it, that the little doctor should set out the hearts-ease in the border.

More and more often they rested from their work on Sylvia's account, but she never failed to respond smiling to his good-bye wave in the door.

So it was that they said good-bye with never a tear nor shadow of parting, for it came to pass, as

Sylvia had foreseen, that the word came suddenly, and in the night.

His mother told the little doctor, holding him, great boy that he was, in her lap; but it appeared that on the very next day but one, he himself was going a short journey — just for an hour or two, to Aunt Maggie's in the country. And strangely enough, when the doctor's boy had bundled him into the buggy, and they started briskly down the road, the little doctor looked back just once at the house with the vine-shaded porch, and there blew outward, as if waved by hand, a white scarf of Sylvia's, from the door-knob — she had forgotten it.

But when they returned in the early dusk, it was no longer there; Amanda had taken it in. But there were still the marks of hoofs in the dust at Sylvia's gate, and the wheel-prints of the carriage in which she had gone away.

He tried to think about the garden in which he had planted hearts-ease for Sylvia, and what she had said about his pleasant prescriptions; and that now she was quite well. And he remembered how it had all turned out as she had said — and they had waved each other a gay good-bye, without knowing it was good-bye. He was glad somehow, that he had told her about Lizzie — she had asked him more than once about her; and he fell to thinking about old Judge Pruden and Lizzie and Sylvia, somehow as if they had come to know each other well.

But strangely enough, neither he nor Sylvia had ever thought how lonely the little doctor would be without his best-loved patient.

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